PlayingCLIL, a new game-based methodology using drama pedagogy

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Abstract—**Linguistic immersion programs are increasing nowadays. The concept of being bilingual, that started being used by schools for the elite in the 19th century, and that in the mid-20th century became an educational option, has given raise to CLIL (*Content and Language Integrated Learning*), a methodology through which students work in a bilingual environment, acquiring knowledge of curricular subject and developing their competences in a foreign language. In this teaching context started a new European project called PlayingCLIL. Six partners from different European countries (Germany, United Kingdom, Spain and Romania) are working in this project. Our main aim is to develop a new methodology to learn a foreign language combining elements from the pedagogic drama (interactive games) with the CLIL classroom. At present we are testing the games in different schools and high schools and we are compiling the results to be collected in a handbook (printed and e-book).**

Index Terms—**bilingual, CLIL, games, learning methodology, pedagogic drama.**

I. INTRODUCTION

THE study of a second language (L2) is required in most schools around the world. In Spain, the educational system obliges the acquisition of a second language that is, in most of cases, English or even French. This fact has been fundamental to expand the studies on Second language acquisition.

There are different studies on language acquisition. Current theory on language acquisition is summarized by five different hypotheses [1], [2]: the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, the Natural Order hypothesis, the Monitor hypothesis, the Comprehension hypothesis and the Affective Filter hypothesis.

The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis distinguishes between language acquisition and language learning. The first one comprises a subconscious process by which a person learns a language without being aware of it, whereas the second one is a conscious process by which a person has to learn the grammatical rules.

The Natural Order hypothesis determines that people learn rules in a non-exact order and there is no possibility to change the natural order.

The Monitor hypothesis ascertains that the rules that we have acquired will serve as our internal monitor and will help us to correct mistakes.

The Comprehension hypothesis establishes that we will acquire a language when we understand it and the Affective Filter hypothesis deals with affective variables. These variables will prevent from input so people opened to the input will acquire language.

All these hypotheses are applied in the creation of a syllabus in the Second Language class since "the goal of language classes is to bring students to the point where they can begin to understand at least some "authentic" (real-world) input. When they reach this point, they can continue to improve on their own" [3] (p. 5). In order to create a learning context in which students receive authentic input or a bilingual context, new teaching and learning methods are being developed. These methods have to include interesting and comprehensible activities that benefit the acquisition of a second language. An example of this is the growth of CLIL methodology.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a term, whose acronym was firstly used by David Marsh [4], and that has arisen from different linguistic immersions programs followed around the world during the 19th century whose main goal was the acquisition of a second language by using it in real contexts. CLIL is one of the most studied methodologies nowadays as is asserted by different authors who try to define and apply it ([5], [6], [7], [8], [9], and [10], among others). In Dalton-Puffer words:

> Widely advertised as a "dual-focused approach" that gives equal attention to language and content (e.g., Mehisto, Marsh, & Frigols, 2008, p. 9), CLIL can be described as an educational approach where curricular content is taught through the medium of a foreign language, typically to students participating in some form of mainstream education at the primary, secondary, or tertiary level [11] (p. 2)

In this quotation, there is a definition of CLIL that reflects exactly its main characteristics: students will work in a bilingual environment acquiring knowledge of curricular

subject and developing their competences in a foreign language. In this sense, they will acquire L2 in the same teaching and learning context as they have acquired their first language or mother tongue (L1).

CLIL is supported by the 4Cs Conceptual Framework developed by Coyle [12]. It concentrates on Content, Communication, Cognition, and Culture. Content refers to the subject matter, that is what it is going to be learned; Communication is related to language; Cognition has to do with thinking and learning; and Culture means the conception of oneself and the others [12], [13]. In this approach language is used as a vehicle to learn content [13].

CLIL is a methodology that is being used in Spain to obtain the English levels proposed by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) [14]. However, this methodology is not being as effective as it should be since "its potential weakness lies in the interpretation of this "flexibility" unless it is embedded in a robust contextualized framework with clear aims and projected outcomes" [13] (p. 546). The "flexibility" means that teachers can teach the content subject as they consider. Teachers, who tend to translate the curricular contents from L1 to L2 and from L2 to L1 without taking into account the aims and the results of this approach, do not understand this flexibility. To improve this, a new European project started in 2014 called PlayingCLIL. Its main aim is to develop a new methodology to learn a foreign language combining interactive games, which use techniques from the pedagogic drama, with the CLIL classroom to increase the motivation for successful second language learning. In this paper we will explain the proposed methodology with examples and present the outcomes that we have obtained until now.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 presents a brief introduction to CLIL, games, and drama pedagogy. Section 3 explains the PlayingCLIL methodology developed by the research group and the results are offered in Section 4.

II. CLIL, GAMES, AND DRAMA PEDAGOGY

CLIL methodology is widespread because the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which reflects on the learning or acquisition process, establishes the importance of knowing several languages [14] (p. 134), and of being autonomous in the learning process ("learning to learn"). In order to learn or acquire a language, some theorists claim that the teachers should provide "the richest possible linguistic environment in which learning can take place without formal teaching" [14] (p. 139). In this context CLIL emerged, an approach that combines the learning or acquisition of content and of language at the same time following the main principles established in the CEFR.

CLIL is offered at primary, secondary and adults education. Usually, the most frequently subjects taught by using the CLIL target language, are sports, arts and sciences. In order to motivate students in CLIL classes, games are used.

A. Games

The definition of the word game presented in the *Oxford English Dictionary* establishes that a game is "an activity or diversion of the nature of or having the form of a contest or competition, governed by rules of play, according to which victory or success may be achieved through skill, strength, or good luck". This activity (the game) helps people in their intellectual, emotional and physical development [15]. While playing, students control their body, coordinate their movements, think about new situations, organize their thoughts, and interact with others. It is proved that the integration of games in class is motivating for students, they learn more effectively and from their mistakes.

Games have to be played following a set of rules established by the teacher and that have to be obeyed by students. Teachers have to take into account several aspects before playing, which are: the time of playing, the materials that will be necessary to play, the relations in the group (who is going to play, how many students will play, if the game will be played individually, in pairs, or in groups, the rules, the organization, and so on), and the place or setting where we are going to play.

As aforesaid, teachers have introduced games in their methodology to motivate students. For this reason a game-based learning methodology was created. In this methodology, students explore the learning context through the game, collaborating and being aware of the consequences that some actions can have. They will commit mistakes, but these mistakes will make them to learn the right way to do the things. In [16] words, "game-based learning refers to the borrowing of certain gaming principles and applying them to real-life settings to engage users". Thus, this author adds "the motivational psychology involved in game-based learning allows students to engage with educational materials in a playful and dynamic way". In this methodology, the teacher has to design different learning activities to introduce new concepts and guide students towards a final goal. This methodology is directly related to drama pedagogy and to CLIL.

B. Drama pedagogy

Drama is connected to learning since drama represents experience and students learn through acting the dramatization of this experience [17]. In this way students will socialise through their participation in performance which will help to improve communication, in the case of a second language lesson, they will acquire the communicative competence. According to [18]:

By implementing a play in L2 (target language) even during rehearsals and lessons to a degree that students are stimulating native speakers and using the language as the only means of communication, the level of immersion transcends classical lessons not only from the language competence point of view, but also from psychological and personal point of view (p. 4)

The drama-based approach helps to acquire vocabulary and grammatical expressions. It is a role-play technique in which students have to "explore, clarify, and elaborate feelings, attitudes, and ideas" [19] (p. 55) so it is a resource that can be used in CLIL lessons to improve communication and interaction in L2. Thus, the combination of drama pedagogy

and game-based learning has deeply influenced the creation of PlayingCLIL.

III. PLAYINGCLIL

PlayingCLIL is a two-year project funded by the European Union through the Lifelong Learning Program that combines elements from pedagogic theatre or drama (game techniques) with the CLIL classroom. Our main aim is to develop a new CLIL methodology that encourages the strengthen of the linguistic and professional learning, the development of social and communicative skills and the creation of more target groups than those addressed before PlayingCLIL.

Six partners from Germany, United Kingdom, Spain and Romania carry out the project. They are:
- Zukunfstabu (Germany)
- Humboldt Universität zu Berlin (Germany)
- Interacting UK (United Kingdom)
- Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (Spain)
- Consejería de Educación, Universidades y Sostenibilidad de Canarias (Spain)
- Liceul cu Program Sportiv Suceava (Romania)

The project has been divided into different stages. The first stage was the bibliographic compilation, that is, the creation of a theoretical background to know the main concepts related to CLIL and the application of these concepts to the methodology that we wanted to create. We have defined CLIL principles and their relationship with every single educational context. After that, we have designed and selected different games that combine drama techniques to be developed in the CLIL lessons. Once the selection of games had been finished, we had to teach teachers to introduce and play the games in the classroom. At present teachers and students who have used and played the games are evaluating them to obtain a feedback and include the required modifications. As soon as we have achieved the feedback, we reevaluate the games and restart the process again to compile the games that are adequate for CLIL different educational contexts.

We have different aims during this project: offering a new methodology to teachers with the necessary materials to be carried out, playing games in the class as new challenges, letting students to learn in a motivating environment, letting students be aware of their learning process, promoting the interaction and the collaboration among classmates, developing the self-confidence and different strategies to do oral presentations, motivating students to use all their senses in diverse learning activities, developing an emotional maturity and different abilities to face both success and failure, and helping students to act, interact, cooperate and compete.

A. Different examples

In this section we offer two examples of the tested games used in PlayingCLIL project. The first one is called "No, you can't take me" and the second one is "Incident".

The first game, "No, you can't take me", is generally used to evaluate subject contents. In this case, we will use it as a method to assess the digestive and the circulatory systems. The class has to be divided into two different teams. One team will represent the digestive system and the other one the circulatory system. Each team must identify the components, parts or conditions which make up the system and they have to take on the role of one of the components and practice being that thing in an order agreed on by the team, physically connecting to visually represent the whole. The members of the team have to think and discuss why the components are not only important, but also indispensable to the integrity or functioning of the whole and consider to ask themselves what would happen if component parts were not there. When playing starts teams cannot state what they are.

The teacher or a member of another team takes the role of virus and attempts to remove one of the components. When challenged, each player replies "No, you can't take me!". "Why not? The player answers without mentioning the name of the object in this form: "If you take me away…." followed by something that would go wrong without the component.

Once all the players have had their say, the audience tries to guess what the subject of the challenge is, and which component each player represents.

In this game, the representation of the digestive system will encourage cooperation among the members of the group to create the figure and the subject content to be able to answer to the question "Why not?" when asking for the components. L2 has to be used all the time from the organization of the activity to the end.

The second game is called "Incident" and it is generally used to work content and language. The teacher has to explain the players that they will describe an event or incident through freeze frame shots that will represent before it happens, as it is happening and after it has happened. Then, the class must be divided into groups of five students. Each group will choose a reporter who will present the three scenes and the other four students will perform them. Each posture must be held for about three seconds; they will not act, but describe the action through their gestures. After the incident is shown, the teacher has to ask the rest of the class if they knew what was happening. The teacher can invite the performers to repeat the postures and at each one, ask questions, as Where is s/he now? What is s/he doing? What has happened?

In this game the students use L2 when deciding how to describe the three scenes. At the same time they exploit their content subject knowledge to explain the scenes.

These two examples can be extrapolated to different subjects and to different language levels. The teacher only has to adapt the games to the subject and conditions of the learning group.

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper has shown PlayingCLIL, a European project in which the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria is participating. PlayingCLIL presents a new methodology that combines game-based learning with drama pedagogy to be used in CLIL lessons. For this, we have studied the CLIL principles to create the theoretical background. Then we have selected a set of games. One of the partners of the project, Interacting UK, has a large experience in training teachers in drama and games. From this experience different games were selected considering aspects such as popularity of games,

adaptability to different contexts, language level and the performance level required.

These games are being tested at schools, high schools and centres for adult education. From this testing activity, we are selecting 50 different games (following the abovementioned criteria), which are being described in depth to be easily used by teachers.

New technologies have not really been considered in the design of the project since one of the main objectives of the different games has been to create a good atmosphere to trigger the interaction. Our main aim is the compilation of all the tested games and the creation of a useful handbook, and an ebook that would provide together with the handbook in paper version, multimedia material, to be used by the teachers as a manual of reference to apply all the games in their CLIL lessons. This manual will help them to encourage motivation and communication in L2.

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